


RESEARCH ARTICLE

Red meets brown: investigating the antiliberal political convergence of Italy's extremes

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Abstract

This study examines the political communication strategies of the Italian Marxist-Leninist and neo-Stalinist party, Sovereign and Popular Democracy (DSP), through a qualitative thematic analysis of its online discourse. The analysis identifies the core elements of the party's agenda and assesses their potential alignment with the red-brownist movement, often linked to the pro-Russian far right. The research investigates the historical and political intersections between the Stalinist communist sphere and the postfascist Eurasianist and red-brownist factions. Particular attention is given to their shared anti-Western stance and historical connections to 'left-wing fascism' in the post-Second World War era. Italy provides a crucial case study, given its postwar role as a hub for radical movements on both the left and the right. The analysis also considers the ideological trajectory of the Italian far-right, particularly the Jeune Europe movement, to situate DSP's discourse within broader historical and ideological frameworks.

Keywords: neo-Stalinism; far right; red-brownism; national Bolshevism; political radicalism; anti-Western ideology; Eurasianism

Introduction: mapping the red-brown phenomenon and the study's structure

In the ongoing shift from a US-led unipolar global order to an emerging multipolar system, notable ideological transformations are occurring, though many remain underexamined. Among these is the convergence of far-right and far-left movements in opposition to liberalism. Known as 'red-brownism' or the 'brown-red cocktail' (Rękawek 2023; Guerra 2023, 2024a), this alignment opposes capitalism, liberalism, and American dominance, rooted in Eurasianist ideology. Historical precedents include the Jeune Europe movement of the 1960s, which, while initially far-right, became politically eclectic, with Euro-Soviet and proto-Eurasianist tendencies. It supported African decolonisation, Arab nationalisms, and the American Black Panthers (Guerra 2024d, 116–133). Described as 'fascist Maoism' (Laqueur 1997, 93), Jeune Europe was seen as 'too pro-European for nationalists, too nationalist for regionalists, and too communist for fascists' (Boutin 1996).

With the emergence of the red-brown phenomenon in Italy, particularly linked to the Sovereign and Popular Democracy (DSP) party and its collaboration with far-right forces, it is crucial to analyse the current state and future implications of this right-left syncretism.

This article examines the historical political context behind DSP's formation, focusing on transformations within the communist and progressive left (Agosti 2000; Pons 2006; Salvati 2003). It then analyses DSP's political discourse to identify its core components and reconstruct its ideological framework. The study highlights its convergence with far-right elements, influenced by the *Jeune Europe* movement, which foreshadowed red-brownism in Italy. While DSP's discourse has been studied, scholarly attention to the far right and broader right in Italy remains more developed. Convergences between DSP and various right- and far-right groups are identified through cross-comparative analysis, contrasting DSP's thematic discourse with extensive literature on the Italian far right.

This study examines parties and movements identifying as sovereigntist, necessitating clarification of the term 'sovereigntism'. While no consensus exists in academic literature (De Rosa 2022, 201–205), this study broadly defines sovereigntism as an ideology centered on sovereignty. It refers to how an entity – individual, group, region, nation, or supranational organisation – establishes and maintains control over its existence and determines its own course of action (Friedman 2018, 136). In political discourse, sovereigntism underpins movements focused on acquiring, preserving, or restoring the political independence of states or regions, viewing global or supranational institutions as threats to such independence (Benhabib 2016, 109)

The political landscape shaping the emergence of the DSP

Marxist historian Luciano Canfora (2023, 10–13) argues that the West's Cold War victory significantly fuelled the rise of right-wing and far-right parties in Europe. In Eastern Europe, this shift spurred ultranationalist movements hostile to socialist ideals and admiring Western capitalism. The right's success has been further enabled by contemporary left-wing parties' reluctance to identify as such and their abandonment of socialist and communist ideological roots. Instead, these parties have adopted a liberalism-Europeanism duality, making them more aptly described as 'semi-left parties' (Canfora 2021, 4).

During the Cold War, Italy – used here as a case study – hosted Western Europe's largest communist party, the Italian Communist Party (PCI). In February 1991, after the Soviet Union's collapse, the PCI renamed itself the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), identifying as post-communist and social-democratic (Gundle and Parker 1995; Ignazi 1992; Weinberg 2018). That same year, a minority faction opposing the PCI's dissolution established the Communist Refoundation Party (PRC). In 1998, the PRC split, leading to the creation of the Party of Italian Communists (PdCI) (Borandini and Di Virgilio 2009; Borgognone 2013). Meanwhile, in 1998, the PDS evolved into the Democrats of the Left (DS), and by 2007, a merger between the DS and the Christian Democratic-rooted *La Margherita* party formed the Democratic Party (PD). As a result, the terms 'communist' and 'left' have effectively vanished.

The history of the Communist Refoundation Party (PRC) was defined by divisions, ruptures, and internal splits (Diliberto, Giacché and Sorini 2011, 269–270). These stemmed from the contradictions of a self-proclaimed communist party aligning with reformist coalitions within a liberal-bourgeois system (Ferrero 2011, 12–14). The PRC's project ultimately fragmented due to the heterogeneity of its original leadership, which included Trotskyists, Stalinists, Amendolians, libertarians, pro-Soviets, Third Worldists, dissenting Catholics, and anarcho-syndicalists (Caponi 2003; Dalmasso 2021). This lack of theoretical and strategic coherence led the party to focus on narrow issues like government alliances (Borgognone 2013, 115). In February 2011, PRC militants protested in Rome against 'Gaddafi allied with Berlusconi', advocating regime change in Tripoli (Wells 2011). In 2012, national secretary Paolo Ferrero expressed solidarity with *Pussy Riot*, citing a commitment to freedom

and democracy. The PRC leadership faced criticism for adopting rhetorical frameworks of political correctness, particularly in its anti-Berlusconi stance (PRC undated; Fusaro 2013).

The Party of Italian Communists (PdCI) is notable for its emphasis on promoting a multipolar world order, particularly in the Middle East and Latin America (Diliberto 2005; Diliberto, Giacché and Sorini 2011, 67). The PdCI also draws inspiration from the 'market socialism' models of China and Vietnam (Diliberto, Giacché and Sorini 2011, 68). However, its political activity has largely revolved around forming alliances with the centre-left (Borgognone 2013, 121). Both the PRC and the PdCI have been criticised for prioritising these alliances – especially through overt anti-Berlusconism – over developing a cohesive communist ideological framework capable of enduring after the Soviet Union's collapse.

In 2010, after the left's electoral collapse in 2008, the Left Ecology and Freedom (SEL) party was formed. It brought together factions from the PRC, DS, Greens, and defectors from the PdCI, with strong support in central and southern Italy, centered around Nichi Vendola (Borgognone 2013, 3–5). Vendola's model, inspired by the American Democratic Party, emphasised the 'three Ts' – Technology, Talent, and Tolerance. His strategy involved aligning closely with the Democratic Party (PD) to form a new centre-left coalition, earning him the nickname 'the white Obama' (Borgognone 2013, 12). The SEL aimed to revive Italian reformist socialism's liberal and libertarian traditions (Tranfaglia 2000), promoting Eurocentrism. However, critics of centrism saw this as cultural subordination to American social and political models, or the 'American way of life' (Tarchi 2004, 63–89). The 2013 parliamentary elections marked a significant defeat for the SEL and the so-called radical left. For several years, the radical left had been largely absent from the Italian political scene. Likewise, there was no communist party actively positioning itself in opposition to the liberal-bourgeois system, as many had instead chosen to participate in anti-Berlusconi coalitions with the centre-left.

In 2014, the Communist Party (PC) was founded in Italy, uniting individuals committed to communist ideals from political and cultural spheres. Marco Rizzo became the party's first secretary. Rooted in Marxist-Leninist ideology, the PC aims to transform Italy into a socialist republic, rejecting reformist and revisionist theories, along with figures like Palmiro Togliatti and Enrico Berlinguer from the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Instead, it draws inspiration from the experiences of real socialist countries and the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin (PC 2017). The PC's portrayal of Stalin as a 'giant of history whose memory will never fade' is a unique stance within contemporary communism and the radical left, which typically condemns the excesses of real socialism (PC 2015).

In 2022, the Communist Party (PC) joined the Italia Sovrana e Popolare (ISP) coalition and, by 2023, helped form Sovereign and Popular Democracy (DSP) alongside other movements. This followed a 2022 split within the PC amid accusations of a shift toward sovereigntism (Salvo 2023). Both the PC and DSP are Eurosceptic, viewing the European Union as imperialist and advocating Italy's withdrawal from NATO, aligning with a strongly anti-American stance. They support Russia in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, express solidarity with Palestine, and align with Cuba, North Korea, and Vietnam (Riscossa 2022; PC 2017, 3; PC 2022). This position contrasts with other Italian communist parties. The Trotskyist Communist Alternative Party (PDAC) and Communist Workers' Party (PCL) oppose Russia (Guerra 2024a). Similarly, the Communist Refoundation Party (PRC), though initially opposed to both NATO and Russia under the slogan 'against war, against Putin, against NATO', is critical of Putin's Russia and rejects the 'authoritarian, bureaucratic, and Stalinist degenerations of socialism' (Guerra 2024a; PRC 2013). The PC and DSP stand out for rejecting electoral dialogue with left-wing or centrist forces. They seek to revive Stalinism's political legacy while opposing NATO and what they perceive as the Americanisation of politics and society.

In the spring 2024 municipal elections in Modena, the DSP supported Daniele Giovanardi's candidacy alongside the Indipendenza (Independence) movement, led by Gianni Alemanno. Alemanno, a key figure in the Italian right, served as Minister of Agriculture and Forestry in Berlusconi's government from 2001 to 2006 and as mayor of Rome from 2008 to 2013. The media labelled this alliance a 'red-brown' coalition, combining far-left and far-right elements (FQ 2024; Pucciarelli 2024). The political stance of the PC and its leader, Marco Rizzo, had long been described as promoting red-brownism (Guerra 2019).

Objectives, methodology, and thematic clusters in discourse analysis

The red-brown phenomenon, also known as red-brownism, has so far been primarily observed in extra-parliamentary contexts. It is most notably associated with the involvement of far-right and far-left foreign fighters who, despite ideological differences, are currently fighting alongside each other in pro-Russian militias on the front lines of the Russian-Ukrainian war (Rekawek 2023; Guerra 2024a, 2024b). The study of red-brownism remains in its early stages. As a political concept, it is largely employed by journalists, often with considerable definitional ambiguity. A preliminary definition in political science suggests that:

it [red-brownism] represents the convergence of the far right and the left against the common identification of neoliberalism as the archenemy. Furthermore, it is relevant for red-brownism that the geopolitical dimension assumes strong relevance compared to the strictly national perspective and therefore the red-browns aspire to transnational political action in opposition to what they consider the enemy, namely the unipolar world order led by the United States. [...] To date, red-brownism can be defined as an ideology in the making in which radicals of the right and left share the critique of the liberal-capitalist system, the process of globalization and American and Western unipolarity. Unlike National Bolshevism, which since the 1960s has also been typical of movements born on the right and arrived at new syntheses such as *Jeune Europe*, red-brownism has implemented a clear change of perspective or a definitive shift from a predominantly national perspective to an eminently transnational one. The glue of red-brownism, as well as in the common criticism of the liberal-capitalist system by radicals of the right and left who have converged in it, is to be identified in Eurasianist geopolitical thought (Guerra, 2024b).

The shift of the red-brown phenomenon from extra-parliamentary contexts and foreign fighters into parliamentary political debate is significant for the visibility of this emerging ideology. Regardless of electoral results, this transition marks an important evolution. It remains uncertain whether the alliance between Marco Rizzo and Gianni Alemanno, and the collaboration between DSP and Indipendenza, will evolve into a lasting political project or stay a tactical, temporary alignment.

What is clear is that the red-brown political movement has now entered parliamentary discourse, expanding beyond its previous extra-parliamentary circles. Reactions from other communist parties have been harsh, with the Communist Workers' Party (PCL) and more radical groups like the Party of Committees for the Support of the Resistance for Communism (CARC) strongly opposing the red-brown alliance (Noce 2024; PCL 2023). Even the right-wing government has criticised Indipendenza and Alemanno, though some right-wing commentators, like journalist Marcello Veneziani (2023), have noted that:

The ideas espoused by Rizzo and Alemanno are neither isolated nor extravagant; rather, they are representative of a widespread sentiment and considerable discontent among the populace. This discontent largely arises from the pervasive disappointment with the governments that have held power in Italy for several years.

The *Indipendenza* movement, founded by Alemanno in November 2023, is new, making its potential role in Italian politics hard to predict. It's uncertain whether the movement will endure or function as an electoral cartel. However, politically, it's clear that *Indipendenza* seeks to appeal to right-wing and far-right voters who don't align with the Atlanticist positions dominant in Italian politics. The movement must also be viewed in the context of fragmentation caused by the Russian-Ukrainian war, which has affected both Italian and European right and far-right groups (Guerra 2023, 2024c). As its name suggests, *Indipendenza* aims to restore Italy's autonomy, seen as being subordinate to the US and NATO. Currently, it reflects how the DSP has gained attention and sought dialogue with far-right factions, including various groups and militants. Italian journalists have described Rizzo as 'the red sovereigntist who steals votes from the right' or 'the communist who appeals to the right' (Muratore 2023).

On the other hand, the Democratic Sovereignty Party (DSP), which should be considered an evolution of the Communist Party (PC) and the *Italia Sovrana e Popolare* (ISP), have maintained a longer-standing presence in the parliamentary political arena. Despite achieving modest electoral results of approximately 1 per cent, its ideology warrants careful examination due to the increasing attention it has garnered and its role as a political laboratory.

To understand why the PC and, later, the DSP have attracted the interest of right-wing voters, it is important to first outline their political proposals. Afterwards, the appeal of these proposals to traditionally right-wing and far-right voters can be evaluated. A qualitative, inductive thematic analysis of the DSP's political discourse was used to identify the key components of the party's proposal (Kiger and Varpio 2020; Braun and Clarke 2006, 2012). The analysis is based on the last 150 posts from the DSP's Facebook page, and the pages of its leaders, Marco Rizzo and Francesco Toscano, totalling 450 posts. The discourse was analysed and placed in the context of the current international tensions, including the Russia-Ukraine and Hamas-Israel conflicts. Once the key elements of the DSP's proposals were identified, a political analysis was conducted to clarify the party's ideological nature and the reasons its proposals appeal to right-wing voters.

Thematic analysis is a method for analysing qualitative data by identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns across a dataset (Kiger and Varpio 2020). It is useful for understanding experiences, thoughts, or behaviours (Braun and Clarke 2012). A theme is a 'patterned response or meaning' (Braun and Clarke 2006, 82) that emerges from the data, informing the research question. Identifying themes requires interpretation and integration of the data (Nowell et al. 2017). Themes can be semantic, addressing explicit meanings, or latent, reflecting deeper meanings, assumptions, or ideologies (Boyatzis 1998; Braun and Clarke 2006). Researchers can use inductive or deductive approaches (Braun and Clarke 2006, 2012). An inductive approach, used in this study, derives themes from the data (Kiger and Varpio 2020). These data-driven themes may not match the literal text and are not necessarily reflective of the researcher's views (Braun and Clarke 2006). In contrast, deductive approaches use a pre-existing framework to identify themes (Braun and Clarke 2006). The inductive approach offers a broader analysis and involves a coding process, a preparatory step in the analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006; Guerra 2020).

The coding in this study was done manually. A code is the basic segment of raw data that can be assessed meaningfully (Boyatzis 1998, 63). A single extract may be labelled

with multiple codes if relevant (Braun and Clarke 2006). The thematic analysis followed a five-step process designed for analysing the language of political radicalisms and counter-hegemonic subcultures. This process, aligning with common methods in qualitative literature, includes: familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Clarke and Braun 2017; Kiger and Varpio 2020). The themes in the DSP's communication were identified using an inductive approach, ideal for analysing ideological and political dimensions, allowing key themes to emerge without directly mirroring the literal content.

From the thematic analysis of the collected textual corpus, eight key thematic areas emerge from the Democratic Sovereignty Party's (DSP) political discourse: 1. Geopolitics and Conflicts; 2. National Sovereignty, Anti-Americanism, and Anti-European Union Sentiments; 3. Labour Exploitation and Impoverishment; 4. Migration and Capitalism; 5. Gender and Surrogacy; 6. Climate Change and Pandemics; 7. History and Resistance; and 8. Criticism of the Left and Party Politics. The first two areas are closely related and could be analysed together, but they are considered separately because the first is more focused on current events and includes more references. The third and fourth areas are also related, but due to the importance of migration in Italian political discourse (Colombo and Sciortino 2004; Simona Talani 2019; Magistro and Wittstock 2021), they are analysed separately.

Unpacking the key elements of DSP's political discourse

The first thematic cluster identified in the analysis consists of texts that primarily focus on the Russia-Ukraine and Hamas-Israel conflicts. These issues are notably contemporary and generate various political and geopolitical considerations. The Democratic Sovereignty Party (DSP) explicitly aligns itself with Russia and President Putin in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The party advocates for peaceful resolutions that encompass the cession of Russian-speaking territories to what it terms the motherland. This position is officially articulated in the party's newspaper, *Riscossa* (2022).

Furthermore, the DSP characterises European support for Ukraine as an imposition by the United States. They emphasise the significant financial commitment of '100 billion [dollars] in five years to Kiev', asserting that 'the Americans are in charge while the Europeans, including Italy, are contributing the funds.' The party also critiques French President Emmanuel Macron's proposal to send European soldiers to Ukraine (Ricard 2024), labelling him a 'robot of big finance'. Additionally, the DSP vehemently criticises European practices concerning the freezing of Russian assets abroad.

The March 2024 attack on Moscow's Crocus City Hall, claimed by ISIS, is addressed by the Democratic Sovereignty Party (DSP) with the statement: 'What's behind ISIS? Let's consider Donald Trump's 2016 assertion: Obama is the founder of ISIS'. By endorsing this, the DSP supports Trump's narrative on ISIS (Pager 2016), backed by journalistic investigations portraying ISIS as an instrument of American and Western geopolitics (Milne 2015; Chengu 2014; Bloggers 2014). The DSP accuses 'mainstream journalists' of failing to explain the Moscow massacre, implying subservience to the US. The attack is framed as a 'risk of plunging toward World War III', with the DSP asserting the entire Italian parliament shares complicity by being 'in favour of war' and supporting the Aspides mission in the Red Sea (Santoro 2024).

Regarding the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the DSP mocks Italian media, claiming they 'even obscure the Pope to continue the war'. The DSP also accuses these outlets of 'drawing up proscription lists of pro-Russians', published in major newspapers (Guerzoni and Sarzanini 2022). In a provocative suggestion, the DSP proposes: 'Let us form a large battalion of politicians and journalists who advocate for war and send them to fight'. The DSP also focuses on the 2024 elections in Slovakia, promoting the slogan 'Slovakia remains on the

side of peace, not war'. The DSP welcomes Peter Pellegrini's election as president, praising his policies favouring engagement with Russia.

The Hamas-Israel conflict is a key issue for the Democratic Sovereignty Party (DSP). The DSP reports on the violence, stating: 'Gaza: another massacre of civilians carried out', and referencing the Associated Press (2024) with 'Israel kills seven aid workers for sharing food with Palestinians'. The party takes a strong stance supporting Palestinians' right to a homeland and condemns Israel's military actions. The DSP also shares news of Israel bombing the Iranian embassy in Syria (Taub 2024), accusing Israel of expanding the conflict. They criticise Western media for portraying Ukraine as a victim and Russia as the aggressor, accusing the US of hypocrisy over Ukraine's NATO bid. A supporter adds, 'right into the Kremlin toilets'. The DSP provocatively asks: 'If Canada had applied to join the Warsaw Pact, how would the US have reacted?'

In relation to the Hamas-Israel conflict, the Democratic Sovereignty Party (DSP) highlights the suicide of American soldier Aaron Bushnell, who tragically self-immolated outside the Israeli embassy in Washington, shouting, 'Free Palestine' (Stieb 2024). While the DSP welcomes the UN ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, it points out that Israel 'holds the record for violations of UN resolutions' (Shamir 2002), expressing scepticism about the truce's success. The DSP also references the violent police crackdown on students in February 2024, who were protesting for peace and Palestinian solidarity (Camilli 2024). This incident is cited as an example of the Euro-Atlantic elites' domination, accused of 'preventing any dissent'.

The second thematic cluster, titled 'National Sovereignty/Anti-Americanism and Anti-EU', explores the Democratic Sovereignty Party's (DSP) geopolitical vision for Italy. The DSP portrays Italy as being under US and NATO control, describing NATO as an 'occupying military force' and an 'aggressive organisation' used for 'American imperialism'. On its Facebook page, the DSP states, 'NATO was born in 1949, and the Warsaw Pact in 1955; that's the lie that NATO is a defensive organisation.' The party asserts that both Italy and Europe are controlled by a 'Euro-Atlantic elite' aligned with US interests. While not rejecting Europe entirely, the DSP critiques the EU as 'subservient to the United States' and rife with 'widespread corruption'. To support this claim, the party cites the 'Pfizer-gate scandal involving Ursula von der Leyen', sharing press articles to substantiate its position (Martuscelli and Braun 2024).

It is evident that the United States is perceived as the sworn enemy of the Democratic Sovereignty Party (DSP). On 15 March 2024, a post on the Facebook pages of both the party and Marco Rizzo states:

On March 15, 1944, US bombers razed the Abbey of Cassino to the ground. This reflects the same doctrine employed by the US in Dresden, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki. From the Korean War to Vietnam, from Iraq to Yugoslavia, the strategy has involved terrorist bombings against civilians.

The Democratic Sovereignty Party (DSP) envisions Italy's disengagement from NATO and withdrawal from the American geopolitical sphere as vital steps toward reclaiming national sovereignty. The DSP asserts online, 'We cannot accept renouncing our identity as an Italian people.' Thus, it advocates restoring both national and European sovereignty. The party honours Italian intelligence agent Nicola Calipari for his sacrifice in Iraq, stating, 'Honour to Nicola Calipari, a brave Italian intelligence officer killed by American soldiers after freeing Giuliana Sgrena.' Calipari's death caused significant diplomatic tensions between Italy and the US (Sgrena 2005; Polo 2015). Additionally, the DSP seeks to distance itself from what

it terms the ‘anti-nationalist left’ (Borkenau 2013; Sempa 2022), promoting a vision of a super-state defined by strong national sovereignty and independent geopolitical actions.

The third thematic cluster, ‘Labour Exploitation and Impoverishment’, underscores the Democratic Sovereignty Party’s (DSP) strong anti-capitalist stance. The DSP condemns ‘cuts in social spending’ and frequently shares news designed to incite public outrage, such as reports about the ‘halving of food portions provided to children in school canteens’. It strongly opposes the ‘privatisation of public health’ and ‘common goods such as water’, as well as the ‘sell-off of the country through the privatisation of strategic sectors’. Using data from the National Statistics Service (ISTAT), the DSP highlights that ‘1 in ten Italians go hungry’ and criticises the wealth and capital concentration driving these inequalities.

In addition, the party targets media narratives that promote ‘the vaunted new jobs’, which they assert offer low wages and lack viable prospects. The DSP draws attention to the controversy surrounding the remuneration of Stellantis CEO Carlos Tavares (Fay 2023) as evidence of how the salaries of multinational executives are increasing exponentially, often at the expense of the ‘exploitation of workers at all latitudes’. The DSP characterises the current economic landscape as one dominated by financial elites who ‘rob the people’. They contend that the progressive impoverishment of the population is exacerbated by media campaigns that ‘promote the use of insects for food’. Overall, the DSP presents the situation as one of ‘increasing capitalist slavery’.

The fourth thematic cluster, titled ‘Migration and Capitalism’, is closely related to the preceding cluster but specifically addresses the issue of migration. The Democratic Sovereignty Party (DSP) contends that ‘mass migrations are orchestrated by the system to undermine the rights of workers across the board’. The party argues that migration flows are promoted by the elites of ‘globalist capitalism’ with the aim of ‘lowering labour costs and reducing workers’ rights’. In its online communications, the DSP constructs a narrative of ‘enslavement’ that negatively impacts workers on a global scale. They assert that this phenomenon not only impoverishes countries of origin, already exploited by neo-colonial practices, but also diminishes average wages in host countries through exploitative labour practices.

The DSP highlights a recent proposal to establish an Italian foreign legion composed of immigrants (Mantovani and Ridolfi 2024) as ‘yet another example of slavery’, framing it as a project aimed at the ‘subjugation of the Italian people’. They argue that ‘migrants are being “integrated” by fighting in Western wars’, implying that these individuals will ultimately be accountable to their ‘new masters of finance’, who will use them to further subjugate the Italian populace. This is a robust critique of migration policies, particularly concerning those originating from Africa, which are perceived by the DSP as a deliberate effort to impoverish the global working class, as well as the countries of both origin and destination. This viewpoint aligns with earlier positions held by the Party of Communist Refoundation (PC), which had already resulted in a rift with centre-left parties (Guerra 2019).

The fifth and sixth thematic clusters, ‘Gender and Surrogacy’ and ‘Climate Change and Pandemics’, share a unifying anti-capitalist perspective. The fifth cluster is summarised by the Democratic Sovereignty Party’s (DSP) declaration: ‘against gender capitalism’. The DSP critiques gender theories, describing them as ‘instruments of distraction for the masses’ deployed by capitalism. It argues that capitalist elites use these theories to divert attention from diminishing rights to work, fair wages, and workplace safety by emphasising the need to protect individual desires framed as rights. The DSP claims these rights often benefit only small minorities. Surrogacy, in particular, is condemned as a ‘classist and racist commodification of women’, representing capitalist exploitation. The DSP asserts that ‘desires are not rights’, positioning its opposition to surrogacy within its broader anti-capitalist ideology.

The Democratic Sovereignty Party (DSP) asserts that capitalism seeks to convince the masses that individual desires equate to rights. While promoting this mentality, capitalism simultaneously deprives the population of fundamental rights, including access to work, fair wages, healthcare, and education. Regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, the DSP refrains from engaging with the conspiracy theories prevalent on social media. Instead, the party delivers a strong critique of Italy's pandemic management and the associated corruption scandals (ANSA 2024; Martuscelli and Braun 2024). These scandals illustrate how 'predatory capitalism' extends to speculation regarding public health.

On climate change, the Democratic Sovereignty Party (DSP) highlights critical perspectives from figures like university professor Franco Prodi (Buzzi 2024) and scientist Carlo Rubbia (Meotti 2023), who question its anthropogenic origins. The DSP asserts that capitalist speculation exploits climate change by presenting it as human-induced to generate profit. Two narratives emerge in the DSP's discourse: questioning the extent to which productive activities drive climate change and critiquing how addressing it has turned into a capitalist venture. For example, the DSP shares posts arguing that electric vehicles may have a larger environmental and pollution impact than diesel or petrol cars. They emphasise that the push for electric cars is primarily promoted by the capitalist West and not uniformly within the United States. The DSP concludes that electric vehicles would do little to mitigate climate change, serving instead to enrich manufacturers.

The seventh thematic cluster, 'History and Resistance', highlights the Democratic Sovereignty Party's (DSP) roots in the antifascist Resistance movement. The DSP celebrates this history while distinguishing itself from other parties. It contrasts the heroism of 'partisan patriots' with what it frames as an Anglo-American invasion, asserting that American forces merely replaced German occupiers. The DSP denounces the 'Anglo-American bombings of cities and defenceless populations', framing these acts in stark opposition to the bravery of Italian partisans. Unlike other parties that celebrate Italy's liberation by emphasising the role of American forces, the DSP focuses on the antifascist Resistance, emphasising its communist roots. This approach fosters a narrative that is both antifascist and nationalist while opposing American influence.

The final thematic cluster centers on the Democratic Sovereignty Party's (DSP) criticism of left-wing and centre-left parties, as well as Marxist groups aligned with these factions. The DSP rejects the left-wing framework, defining itself as exclusively communist. The Italian left, especially the Democratic Party (PD), is described as a bastion of 'transformism and hypocrisy' and part of the 'new partycratic caste', alongside the populist Five Star Movement (M5S). Left-wing electoral lists are derided as featuring 'dancers, journalists, and fireworks designed to attract attention'. Marxist and leftist groups allied with the PD are dismissed as 'dependencies of the PD', labelled as false Marxists and reformist communists. The DSP portrays the PD as an American, capitalist party aligned with the political right, asserting that 'there are no differences between the right and the left among Italian parliamentarians.' The DSP firmly rejects alliances with any forces lacking anti-capitalist principles.

Redefining boundaries: populism, neo-Stalinism, and the emergence of post-fascist neo-Eurasian thought

Considering the key themes of the Democratic Sovereignty Party's (DSP) political discourse, an ideologically Marxist-Leninist, yet radical, proposal emerges. This perspective favours Stalin and Stalinism while criticising reformist, revisionist, and Eurocommunist approaches. Historical figures of Italian communism, such as Palmiro Togliatti and Enrico Berlinguer, are scrutinised critically. The DSP employs a populist communication style, identifying capitalism – especially tied to the United States and the 'economic-cultural

imperialism of the West' – as its primary enemy. Capitalism is blamed for many societal ills. In response, the DSP advocates Italy's withdrawal from NATO and disengagement from American geopolitical influence to reclaim national sovereignty. The West is rejected outright, equated with capitalism and Americanism.

Central to the DSP's political proposal is a focus on the nation and state, viewed as key to ensuring collective well-being. The DSP calls for an immediate halt to privatisation, framing the state as an anti-capitalist force and driver of social justice. Opposing the liberal capitalist vision, it critiques LGBTQ+ rights and surrogacy, labelling them 'gender capitalism' and viewing them as distractions for the masses. The DSP argues that expanding individual rights and 'liberal concessions' obscure the deprivation of 'real rights', such as work, fair wages, health care, and education. The revival of Stalin and Stalinism sets the DSP apart from other communist parties and leftist factions. In its national-communist reconstruction of the antifascist Resistance, the DSP portrays the Anglo-American intervention not as liberation but as a continued occupation of Italy.

To date, studies have examined the relationship between the left and nationalism in various countries (Albo 1990; Dinas 2012), as well as the connection between environmentalism and nationalism (Conversi and Friis Hau 2021; Arantes 2024; Ishchenko 2020; Gurrutxaga 2005; Brykczynski 2014; Ruiz Jiménez, Romero Portillo and Navarro Ardoy 2021). However, the link between radical Marxism and nationalism, along with its potential geopolitical implications, remains underexplored. The Democratic Sovereignty Party (DSP) rejects comparisons with extreme-left or leftist parties and distances itself from communist parties in Italy that reject Stalinism. The DSP considers such rejection a 'pathological deviation from the correct path of Bolshevism' (Pipino 2023, 3). The relationship between nationalism and Marxism remains debated, with no clear academic consensus (Kasprzak 2012; Battis 2023; Shcherbak 2015; Gilley 2016; Glenn 1997). Although this theme is increasingly relevant (Chongfu 2014; Schwarzmantel 2012; Mevius 2009), a comprehensive understanding is still lacking.

For the DSP, communism encompasses Stalinism, viewing it as the 'guardian of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy' (Aron 1956). This aligns with the Stalinist belief that strengthening a socialist state benefits the international working class. Nationalism within the DSP's ideological framework is linked to both Stalin and Stalinism (Vujacic 2007; Nelson 2015; Roginsky 2008). The DSP's ideology is grounded in communist nationalism, emphasising self-determination, popular sovereignty, Marxism-Leninism, and anti-imperialism directed against the United States (Chazel and Dain 2021; Smith and Berger 1999, 50). The party advocates for nationalist communism aimed at reducing Italy's wealth gap, nationalising key services and companies, and restoring national sovereignty within an authoritarian, Stalinist context.

The DSP does not exhibit social-democratic nationalism but follows a Marxist-Leninist, neo-Stalinist nationalism that rejects liberalism. The party's nationalism is tied to a revival of Stalin's ideas, especially his concept of proletarian patriotism, which is seen as a means of class struggle on a global scale (Van Ree 2002, 49; Nimni 1991, 14–16). Stalin's view that nations are cultural communities, not racial constructs, also shapes the DSP's perspective (Van Ree 2002, 67). The DSP's critique of migration is not based on racism but on an anti-capitalist rationale aimed at defending workers nationally and globally.

In analysing the potential attraction that the Democratic Sovereignty Party's (DSP) proposals may exert on the far right, as noted by various Italian newspapers (*il Tempo* 2023; PMLI 2024), it is essential to clarify several key political aspects before undertaking this examination. The ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict has revealed that the Italian parliamentary right, represented by Fratelli d'Italia (FdI), has adopted a clear Atlanticist position. This stance aligns with the historical trajectory of the Italian parliamentary right.

In contrast, the far right has fragmented into two factions: a pro-Ukrainian majority and a pro-Russian minority. The pro-Ukrainian faction is consistent with the radical Westernism prevalent among most Italian extreme right movements (Guerra 2023, 2024d). The pro-Russian minority, while CasaPound Italia (CPI) – the most prominent movement within the Italian far right – has adopted pro-Ukrainian and anti-Russian positions, consists mainly of militants from the Forza Nuova (FN) movement, as well as those who can be described as postfascists. These individuals adhere to ideologies that the media categorise as red-brown, while they themselves identify as Eurasianist and multipolar (Guerra 2023, 2024a, 2024b).

Consequently, the DSP, as a national-communist and neo-Stalinist party that aligns itself with Russia, could potentially serve as an electoral platform for postfascist Eurasianist militants and supporters of a multipolar global order who are pro-Russian and currently lack a political home. However, it is important to note that this segment, while culturally active through various think tanks, does not fit neatly into the traditional definition of the far right. This group is not particularly engaged in electoral politics; instead, it focuses on cultural activities that adopt a transversal approach, disregarding conventional notions of right and left. It is within this framework that potential convergences must be considered.

First, it is essential to move beyond the notion that the Italian extreme right is a singular entity, often referred to as a ‘black thing’ (Guerra 2023, 2024c). Attention should be given to specific political areas where heretical ideological developments have occurred. This is evident in movements like Jeune Europe, which show how right-wing groups can significantly deviate from their foundational ideologies (Guerra 2024d, 116–133). After the Second World War, the first Italian far-right movement, the Fasci di Azione Rivoluzionaria (FAR), adopted anti-communist stances and collaborated with American intelligence (Guerra 2024d, 62–82). However, it is important to note that Stanis Ruinas’ group embraced revolutionary, leftist interpretations of fascism (Baruzzo 2016). This group founded the newspaper *Il Pensiero Nazionale*, which promoted anti-capitalist and anti-Western ideas, and was notably funded by the Italian Communist Party (PCI) (Buchignani 1998).

Thus, following the Second World War, there was a notable ideological transition from the Fascist experience – specifically, the so-called ‘left-wing fascism’ (Parlato 2000; Rimbotti 1989) – toward the PCI, despite the limited number of militants involved. This eclectic political trajectory is exemplified by the figure of Nicola Bombacci, the original founder of the Italian Communist Party, who faced persecution during the Fascist regime. Bombacci ultimately met his death alongside Benito Mussolini in Piazzale Loreto after joining the Italian Social Republic, with the aim of implementing the socialisation of industry (Bombacci 1983; Noiret 1992; Petacco 1996; Salotti 1986; Dell’Orco 2012; Vincenti 2020). In Italy, the neologism ‘fascist-communist’ was coined to describe Bombacci and his ideological contributions (Cabona 2012).

Throughout the 1960s, the Jeune Europe (JE) movement, founded by Jean Thiriart, was active in Italy and across Europe. Originating from the extreme political right, the movement evolved to adopt Euro-Soviet, pro-Maoist, Third Worldist, anti-imperialist, and anti-American positions (Guerra 2024d, 116–133). The JE movement is considered heretical by other factions within the extra-parliamentary right, particularly those aligned with pro-Western positions. This perception arises partly from JE’s connections with the American Black Panthers, Romanian communism under Nicolae Ceaușescu, and various African anti-colonialist nationalist movements (Guerra 2024d, 116–133). Moreover, the JE movement is regarded as excessively pro-European for nationalists, too nationalist for regionalists, and too communist for fascists (Boutin 1996, 133). Notably, one of the initial members of JE was Renato Curcio, who later co-founded the Red Brigades. Following the movement’s dissolution at the end of the 1960s, many of its cadres and militants transitioned to radical left

movements. This shift illustrates an irreconcilable ideological break from the numerically dominant Westernist extreme right (Guerra 2024d, 116–133).

This rupture is further underscored by the fact that several militants from the extremist group Ordine Nuovo (ON) – which is linked to American and NATO intelligence in an anti-communist capacity – trained in Israel and participated in the anti-Palestinian struggle (Salvini 1998, 258–259; Lombardi *n.d.*, 155; Limiti 2023, 69–73). In contrast, the first European militant to die at the hands of Israel while serving in Palestinian ranks was Roger Coudroy, a member of JE, in 1969. The geopolitical positioning of JE can be considered, for all intents and purposes, pre-Eurasianist. The movement advocated for the concept of a ‘Europe from Brest to Vladivostok,’ envisioning a Europe liberated from NATO influence and characterised by anti-American sentiments (Thiriart 1964, 1965, 1967).

Although Jeune Europe (JE) had relatively few militants compared to the radical Westernist right, its cultural and geopolitical influence has persisted. After its dissolution, no movements directly inherited its political direction, yet its influence still affects parts of the radical right, despite the lack of formal JE movements or parties. This influence is particularly evident in the Nouvelle Droite (ND) (François 2021), seen in publications like *Orion*, central to the National Bolshevism movement in Italy (Terraciano 2020). Additionally, think tanks linked to contemporary Eurasianism reflect JE’s legacy. In the mid-1980s, Thiriart’s new ideas revived national Europeanism within some French and Italian far-right circles, promoting his vision for a Euro-Soviet empire. National Bolshevism, a Russian ideology revived by figures like Eduard Limonov and Aleksandr Dugin, has deep historical roots in both Russia and Germany (Van Ree 2001; Krausz 1995; Mathyl 2002). While National Bolshevism influenced the red-brown convergence, it remains distinct and rooted in Russian political thought. In contrast, the red-brown alliance stands apart due to its unique geopolitical outlook, often aligning with proponents of Eurasianism and advocating for a multipolar world order that challenges US-led Western unipolarity (Guerra 2024c).

Claudio Mutti, a key figure in the JE movement during the 1960s, played a crucial role in rekindling national Europeanists’ interest in the Soviet Union. He initiated correspondence with Aleksandr Dugin, whom he met in Paris in spring 1990. During this meeting, Dugin also met French intellectual Alain de Benoist and several JE heirs (Montanari 1998, 162). After the Soviet Union’s collapse, foundations were laid for collaboration between Thiriartian nationalists and the Russian National Communist opposition. On 27 March 1992, a delegation including Alain de Benoist and Robert Steuchers was invited by Dugin to meet Red Army generals. The following day, they had a roundtable with Gennady Zjuganov. On 7 June 1992, Mutti visited Moscow and met Zjuganov, arranging a long visit for Thiriart in late August. During this visit, Thiriart participated in two roundtables with the National Communist opposition to Boris Yeltsin. Zjuganov and Yegor Ligachev, former number two of the CPSU, shared Thiriart’s concerns about countering the global spread of the American way of life (Montanari 1998, 162). Through these relationships, Thiriart’s ideas reemerged politically, gaining a new dimension that went beyond purely geopolitical concerns. This development was significant, uniting national Europeanists and national communists in a shared project.

The current convergence between a minority segment of the Italian extreme right and radical Marxist-Leninist and Stalinist groups, particularly in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, is rooted in deep historical and political contexts. While these groups remain minorities even within the far right, their ideological convergence is significant in political studies due to their shared opposition to the liberal order. Key elements of this potential convergence are more political, cultural, and geopolitical than electoral in nature. These include a shared anti-American sentiment, with the US representing capitalism, a common opposition to liberal thought, and a central role for the state as a promoter of

social justice and custodian of the common good. Additionally, a multipolar geopolitical vision counters the American and Western unipolar order, along with a rejection of the West. While Italian political journalists highlight the convergence between the Democratic Sovereignty Party (DSP) and Alemanno's Indipendenza movement, it is important to understand these alliances as reflections of broader cultural and metapolitical convergences, rather than merely electoral ones. The alignment of pro-Russian far-right movements with neo-Stalinist parties, like the DSP, is currently evident at the cultural and ideological level, rather than in electoral terms.

At this moment, the nature of this possible convergence does not appear to be electoral. Rather, it exists within what could be defined as a political-ideological construction site of dissent. Undoubtedly, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, along with its geopolitical implications, seems to have accelerated the developmental processes of this red-brown political area. However, this area remains in a state of flux.

Conclusion: the formation of a new anti-liberal metapolitical identity

Predicting the future of red-brownism presents considerable challenges. However, it is clear that it is an evolving ideological domain. The identification of common adversaries is a key factor in the political and ideological development of this area. Additionally, the shared experiences of foreign fighters in pro-Russian militias may strengthen these connections. Yet, it seems premature to suggest that these dynamics will form a cohesive political project centred around the Democratic Sovereignty Party (DSP) with an electoral dimension. Although establishing a parliamentary presence could aid in the development of red-brown thought, several barriers remain, with the primary obstacle being historical issues tied to the antifascist resistance.

The political landscape of red-brownism requires further analysis, particularly regarding its potential to serve as a catalyst for dissent. This dissent has historically been fragmented across opposing political fronts. A key question arises: can the convergence and hybridisation of opposing radicalisms lead to a new form of radicalism that challenges the liberal democratic order? To address this, research projects must focus on the political, ideological, and geopolitical dynamics of radical red-brown convergence.

This convergence is not only evident in Italy but has also attracted attention in other countries, especially France, where it is referred to as the red-green-brown alliance, reflecting a fusion with eco-fascist and deep ecologist ideologies (del Valle 2002, 2004; Higgins 1993; Le Monde 2003). In the future, it will be essential to expand the understanding of this phenomenon to other countries to determine whether it represents a transnational ideological convergence or if it reflects local phenomena that are difficult to reconcile on a broader scale. Additionally, exploring how this red-brown hybridisation intersects with Eurasianism and think tanks advocating for a new multipolar world order will be crucial in different national contexts.

The two components of the red-brown phenomenon share a strong critique of liberalism, linking it to issues such as 'savage and exploitative capitalism', 'the mass distraction of genderism', 'a pseudo-democracy serving only elites and financial powers', and 'the alleged domination of the West'. This shared critique could effectively unite radical political forces historically seen as incompatible. It seems we are witnessing the early stages of forming a cohesive political and cultural area that could create a unified anti-liberal dissent front. However, this front currently shows more cultural, metapolitical, and extra-parliamentary dimensions than electoral ones.

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Italian summary

Questo studio esplora le strategie di comunicazione politica del partito marxista-leninista e neostalinista italiano Democrazia Sovrana e Popolare (DSP) attraverso un'analisi tematica qualitativa del suo discorso online. L'indagine mette in luce gli elementi centrali dell'agenda del partito e ne valuta il possibile allineamento con il movimento Rosso-Bruno, spesso legato alla destra radicale filorusa. La ricerca approfondisce le connessioni storiche e politiche tra la sfera comunista stalinista e le correnti post-fasciste eurasiatiste e Rosso-Brune, con particolare attenzione al loro comune atteggiamento anti-occidentale e alle radici condivise nel cosiddetto 'fascismo di sinistra' del dopoguerra. L'Italia emerge come un caso di studio privilegiato, grazie al suo ruolo centrale nel panorama dei movimenti radicali di sinistra e destra nel periodo post-bellico. Inoltre, l'analisi ripercorre l'evoluzione ideologica dell'estrema destra italiana, con un focus sul movimento Jeune Europe, per collocare il discorso del DSP all'interno di un contesto storico e ideologico più ampio e complesso.

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